

CLAIMS

1. A probe assembly, comprising:
an elongate tube for insertion into a body cavity, having a longitudinal central axis; and
5 a braided tube comprising a braid, coupled to the elongate tube, within the elongate tube or along side but not surrounding the elongate tube, wherein a central longitudinal axis of the elongate tube does not coincide with the central axis of the braided tube.
2. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the elongate tube comprises a catheter.
- 10 3. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the elongate tube comprises an endoscope.
4. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the elongate tube comprises a sheath adapted for isolating an elongate probe from a patient's body.
- 15 5. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the inner surface of the braided tube has a texture of the braid.
6. An assembly according to claim 5, wherein the inner surface of the braided tube
20 comprises an uncoated braid surface.
7. An assembly according to claim 1, comprising a sheath adapted to receive the elongate tube and the braided tube adjacent each other.
- 25 8. An assembly according to claim 1, comprising an internal sheath adapted to receive the elongate tube and an external sheath surrounding the internal sheath, wherein the braided tube is located between the internal and external sheaths.
9. An assembly according to claim 8, wherein the braided tube is more resilient than the
30 internal and external sheaths.
10. An assembly according to claim 8, wherein the braided tube is permeable to liquids.

11. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the axis of the braided tube is located outside the elongate tube.
12. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube has a substantially uniform cross-section substantially over its entire length.
13. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube has different cross-section areas at different axial portions thereof.
14. An assembly according to claim 13, wherein the braided tube is flared at its proximal end.
15. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube is stiffened by passing it through a heated die.
16. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the braided tube is coated by an adhesive or solvent.
17. An assembly according to claim 16, wherein an end of the braided tube is coated by an adhesive or solvent, while a central portion of the braided tube is not coated.
18. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube comprises strands which move independently relative to each other.
19. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube is more flexible than the elongate tube.
20. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube is sufficiently flexible to remain open even when bent at least 90° with a radius of less than 2.5 centimeters.
21. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube is formed of strands of a relatively rigid material, a solid tube of same dimensions as the braided tube formed of the

relatively solid material would not remain open under a 90° bend with a radius of less than 2.5 centimeters.

22. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube is formed of strands of
5 nylon or polyester.
23. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube includes at least 36 strands.
- 10 24. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the braided tube may be collapsed into a closed state and reopened into an opened state.
25. An invasive probe assembly, comprising:
an elongate tube for insertion into a body cavity; and
15 a braided tube having an inner surface texture following a braid of the tube,
wherein the braided tube is coupled to the elongate tube, within the elongate tube or
along side but not surrounding the elongate tube.
26. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube is substantially liquid-
20 impervious.
27. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braid of the braided tube has holes
between strands of the braid.
- 25 28. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube is more flexible than the elongate tube.
29. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube can apply suction along
its length even in a collapsed state, due to spaces between strands forming the braid.
- 30 30. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube is stiffened so as not to
collapse under suction of at least 630 mm Hg.

31. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube is stiffened by passing the tube through a heated die.

32. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube comprises a non-braided
5 coating on its external surface.

33. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube comprises a non-braided coating on its internal surface.

10 34. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein the braided tube does not have a non-braided coating on its internal surface.

35. A method of performing a medical procedure, comprising:
inserting a braided tube in a folded state into a cavity of a patient;
15 opening the braided tube within the cavity; and
passing a tool or fluid through the opened braided tube.

36. A method according to claim 35, wherein opening the braided tube comprises passing a liquid or elongate tool through the braided tube.
20

37. A method of performing a medical procedure, comprising:
providing a braided tube having an inner surface texture following a braid of the tube;
inserting the braided tube into a cavity of a patient; and
passing a tool or fluid through the braided tube while it is in the cavity, such that the
25 tool or fluid contacts the inner surface of the braided tube while being passed through the tube.

38. A method according to claim 37, wherein passing the tool or fluid comprises passing a fluid.

30 39. A method according to claim 38, wherein passing the fluid comprises applying suction.

40. A method according to claim 38, wherein passing the fluid comprises inserting a liquid through the braided tube into the body cavity.

41. A probe assembly, comprising:
an elongate tube for insertion into a body cavity; and
a braided tube comprising a braid, coupled to the elongate tube, within the elongate
5 tube or along side but not surrounding the elongate tube, wherein the braided tube is more
flexible than the elongate tube.
42. An assembly according to claim 41, wherein the braided tube is sufficiently flexible to
remain open even when bent at least 90° with a radius of less than 2.5 centimeters.
- 10 43. An assembly according to claim 41, wherein the braided tube is formed of strands of a
relatively rigid material, a solid tube of same dimensions as the braided tube formed of the
relatively solid material would not remain open under a 90° bend with a radius of less than 2.5
centimeters.
- 15 44. An assembly according to claim 41, wherein the braided tube is formed of strands of
nylon or polyester.
45. A probe assembly, comprising:
20 an elongate tube for insertion into a body cavity; and
a braided tube comprising a braid, coupled to the elongate tube, within the elongate
tube or along side but not surrounding the elongate tube, wherein the braided tube comprises
strands which move independently relative to each other.
- 25 46. An assembly according to claim 45, wherein the braided tube comprises a braid of
strands that is not coated over most of its length.
47. An assembly according to claim 45, wherein the braided tube comprises a braid which
is coated at its end in order to prevent fraying.
- 30 48. A probe assembly, comprising:
an elongate tube for insertion into a body cavity; and

a collapsible braided tube comprising a braid, coupled to the elongate tube, within the elongate tube or along side but not surrounding the elongate tube, wherein the braided tube may be collapsed into a closed state and reopened into an opened state.